

# Increasing Access to Wisconsin's Food Stamp Program

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Food Stamp Program Outreach Efforts

The Food Stamp Program Participation Grant

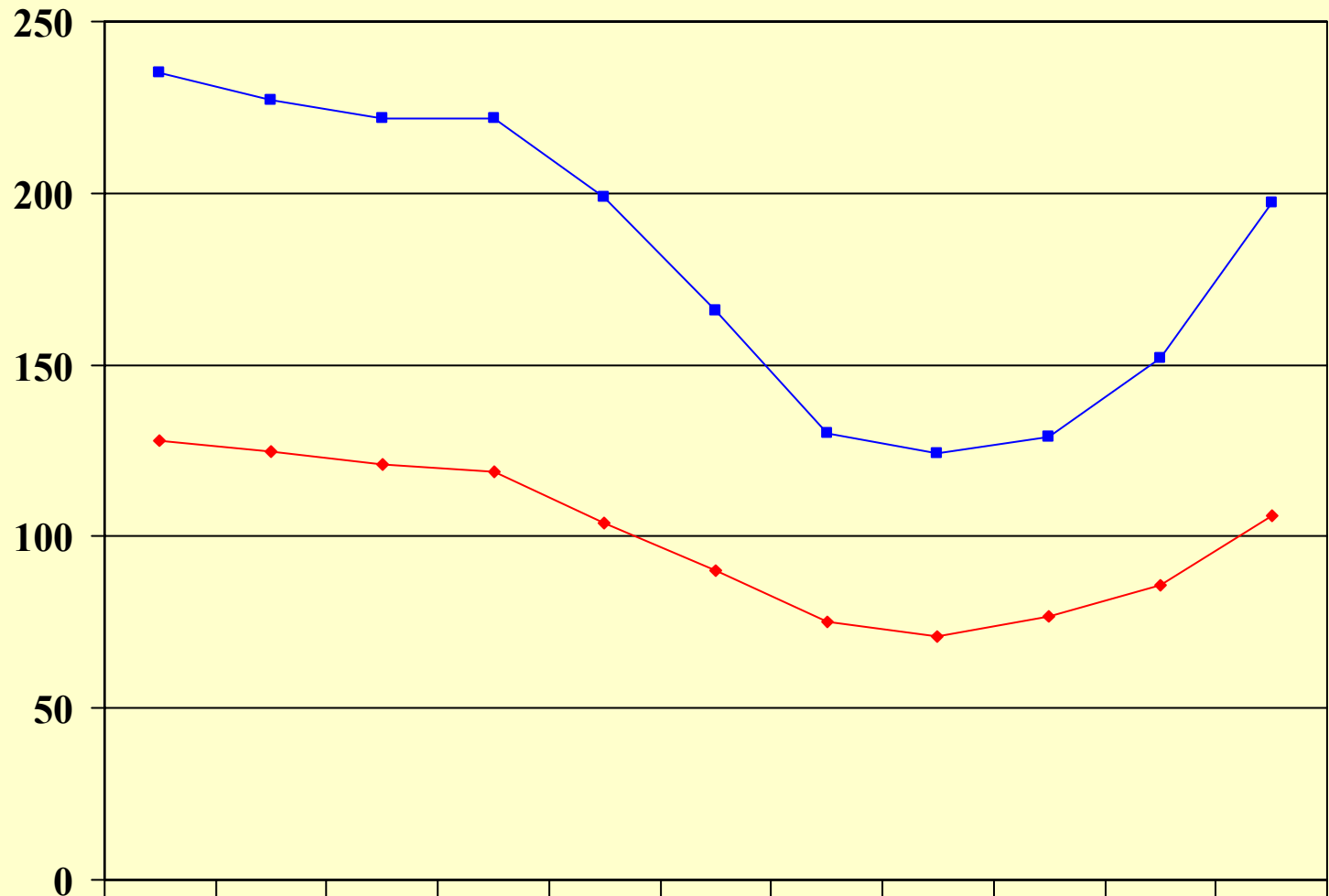
The SSI Combined Application Project (SSI CAP)

# **Participation in Wisconsin's Food Stamp Program**

- The FS program is the biggest food assistance program in the nation and in Wisconsin. As of May 2003, 301,000 people are enrolled in the FS program in Wisconsin
- The DHFS Mission is to lead the nation in fostering healthy self-reliant individuals and families. Access to good nutrition is essential to good health.
- At an average benefit of \$167 per month, 1,000 new recipients could result in over \$2,000,000 annually in federal funds to Wisconsin.
- Research estimates that \$5 in federal food stamp dollars results in \$9 in economic benefit to the state.

# Food Stamp Program Participation - 1992 through 2002

## (cases and issuance)



|                          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|--------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| ◆ FS Cases (thousands)   | 128 | 125 | 121 | 119 | 104 | 90  | 75  | 71  | 77  | 86  | 106 |
| ■ FS Issuance (millions) | 235 | 227 | 222 | 222 | 199 | 166 | 130 | 124 | 129 | 152 | 197 |

# Food Stamp Program Outreach Activities

## *Planning and Evaluation*

- Research on Target Population - summarize demographics of target population and establish enrollment goals
- Submit state plan amendment on outreach to USDA
- Establish outreach budget
- Evaluate impact of activities
- Monitor caseload in relation to target groups/goals
- Measure and adjust strategies

## **Food Stamp Program Outreach Activities**

### ***New Marketing Plan and Materials***

- Define standard marketing message and encourage its use across DHFS programs
- Change the name of the program
- Promote the message through new and existing publications
- Develop TV and Radio ads in English and Spanish
- Conduct annual mailing to food pantries and other community-based groups to promote the program

## Food Stamp Program Outreach

### *Easing Access*

- Simplify program rules by adopting new federal options including reduced verification requirements for assets, new change reporting policies and 12-month reviews
- Shorten the application form
- Promote self-screening options
- Open up opportunities for waiving the face-to-face interview
- Offer 800# statewide for FS info
- Expand outstation sites in Milwaukee
- Implement the Food Stamp Program Participation Grant

## Food Stamp Outreach Activities

### *Improve Coordination With Other Programs*

- Participate with DPH on development of a nutrition network and statewide obesity prevention campaign
- Direct mail to MA and SC participants about FS
- Research opportunities to target the SSI population
- Incorporate priorities into activities of the Nutrition Education Grantees (UW-Ext, GLITC, The Ho-Chunk Nation)
- Partnership with WIC, CAP agencies, TEFAP and Hunger Task Force via Program Participation Grant
- Explore opportunities to expand programs on EBT

## **Food Stamp Program Outreach Activities**

### ***Provide Training and Technical Assistance***

- Reinforce marketing message at IM staff training
- New training course for community based organizations on the basics of FS eligibility and how to apply
- Publish technical resources on the DHFS web site that can be used by staff in community-based agencies



# FS Outreach Activities - Timeline

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Already complete   | Early research on target population, plan approval by USDA, new brochure, simplify program rules, shorter application form, new training course, published fact sheet & brochure on web |
| Late Summer 2003   | Establish enrollment goals, coordinate with DPH, submit nutrition education plans to USDA, notices to SC participants   |
| Fall 2003          | Change program name, new marketing materials, mailing to food pantries, simplify program rules, offer 800#, coordination with DPH   |
| Winter/Spring 2004 | Evaluation of 2003 activities, monitor caseload trends, measure and adjust strategies, direct mail to MA and SC participants, implement Milwaukee eligibility/outreach van              |

## **FS Outreach Activities - Timeline (*continued*)**

Ongoing and Longer Term: Research on target population, outreach budget planning, explore opportunities to waive face-to-face, expand outstation sites in Milwaukee, promote self-screening options, seek opportunities to target SSI population - CAP project, partnering on program participation grant, explore expanding programs on EBT card, reinforce message in IM training, publish resources on web as available

# **The Food Stamp Program Participation Grant - Background**

- In January 2003, the USDA's Food and Nutrition Services offered grants to organization that would increase the participation in the Food Stamp program. The grant proposal was expected to include coordination with other programs (like Medicaid) and could include components aimed at lowering the state's Food Stamp program error rate.
- Wisconsin submitted its grant proposal which described the creation of a web-based Customer Service Toolbox that would allow interested persons to screen themselves for food stamp and other program eligibility, apply for food stamp and other program eligibility, query their food stamp and other program benefits & case information, and report changes. Our proposal asked for \$2 million dollars for a project that we estimated would cost over \$3.5 million (with staff costs, systems costs, partner costs, etc.)
- In June 2003, FNS awarded a \$1.7 million dollar grant to Wisconsin.

# **FS Program Participation Grant - Background**

Other grants were awarded to

- University of Oklahoma/Oklahoma Department of Human Services - \$843,075**

The project will systematically analyze barriers to participation and will produce a set of alternatives for removing them. At its conclusion, the project will have a Continuous Quality Improvement model to help Oklahoma update its application processing in the future.

- New Jersey Department of Human Services - \$848,570**

The project will implement a statewide web-and-telephone based application process, including an on-line interview. The telephone system will provide answers to questions about food stamp applications, in up to 10 languages, 24 hours a day.

- Virginia Department of Social Services - \$813,831**

The project will implement an on-line pre-screening and application system. The system will provide access to all governmental and private nutrition support services in the state.

- Rhode Island Department of Human Services - \$785,000**

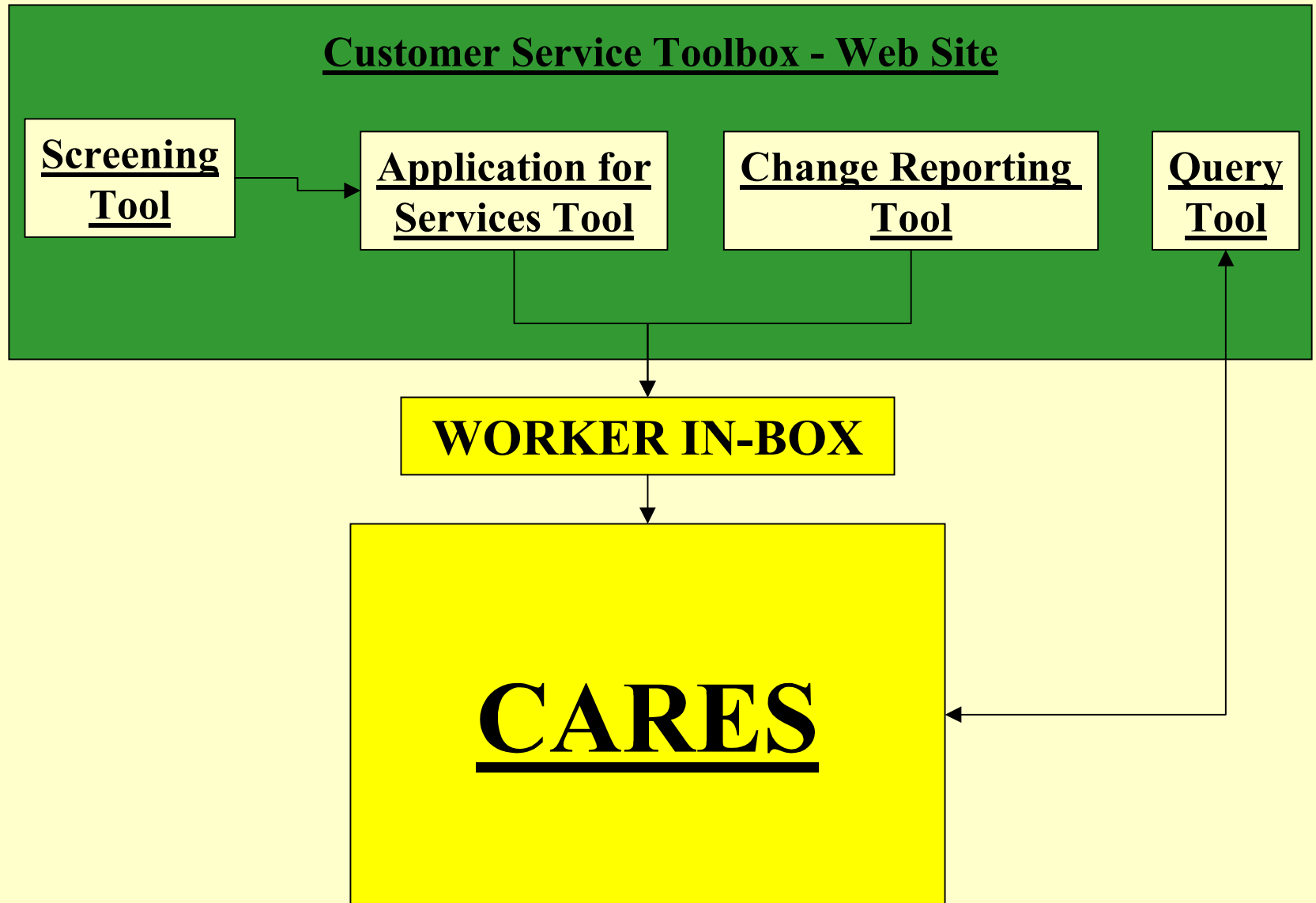
The project will redesign the state agency's application and develop an on-line application system with scanner technology for entering verification documents into the system.

# **Wisconsin FS Program Participation Grant Project - Overview**

The goals of Wisconsin's FS Program Participation Grant Project are:

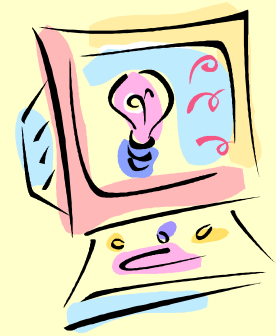
- ☐ Increased Food Stamp Program participation,
- ☐ Increased Food Stamp Program payment accuracy rates,
- ☐ Higher customer satisfaction,
- ☐ Reduced workload on eligibility workers;
- ☐ Enhanced coordination and cooperation between the state agency, local agencies and community-based organizations; and,
- ☐ Increased coordination between Food Stamps and other public assistance programs.

# The Customer Service Toolbox\* - Overview



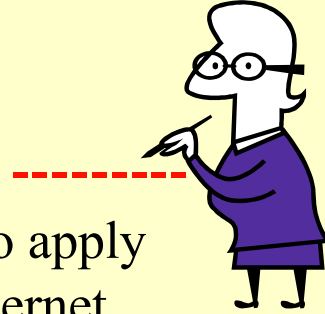
\* this is a temporary name, we'll be working on a marketing plan.

# Screening for Program Eligibility



- The Self–Screener will provide the customer with the information needed to decide whether to apply for Food Stamps.
- Allows the customer to enter basic information about his/her household and to receive a response about potential eligibility for Food Stamps, Medicaid, or other public assistance programs.
- The information entered will not identify the customer.
- The client can opt to then apply for services, at that time their data will be moved into the Application for Services component.
- The tool will be built to include Food Stamps, Medicaid and BadgerCare.
- Expandable to other state, federal and local programs, including: SeniorCare, Child Care, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), the Wisconsin Works (TANF) program, Milwaukee County's General Medical Assistance Program (GAMP), and the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP).

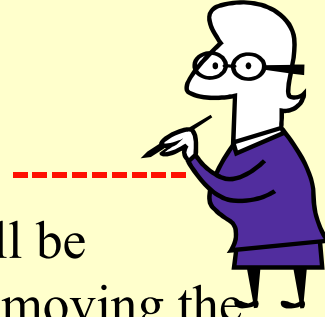
# The Customer Service Toolbox - Applying for Services



- Allows an individual to enter all of the information necessary to apply for Food Stamps or other public assistance programs onto the Internet. The customer can either transfer the information already entered using the Self-Screener to the Application for Services, or go directly to Application for Services.
- Once the customer enters all of the necessary information for determining eligibility, the tool will prompt the customer to review a summary of their information for correctness. Once approved, the application data will be transmitted to the CARES electronic Worker In-Box.
- The Worker In-Box queues up applications and changes received for the work assigned to the case and allows the worker to systematically process these applications and changes.



# The Customer Service Toolbox - Applying for Services



- If the application requires a face-to-face interview, the worker will be prompted by the CARES systems to set up an interview, including moving the data entered by the customer using the Application for Services component to the CARES mainframe screens.
- Once CARES has accepted the data from the In Box, the system will send data requests to other systems (SSA, Child Support, Unemployment Compensation, State Wage, etc.) that supply income data via CARES to the eligibility workers as part of our Data Exchange System.
- At the time of the face-to-face Food Stamps application interview or when processing the Medicaid-Only Internet Application, the worker will have all of the information from 3<sup>rd</sup> party sources to make sure that the application data provided is correct to the best of the applicant's knowledge and the worker's abilities.

# The Customer Service Toolbox - Change Reporting



- Individual participant can go to the web site, enter an assigned case number, user id and password, and access information about his/her case.
- Program participants will be able to query their case for:
  - ☐ Application status
  - ☐ Date of next review and status of review;
  - ☐ Changes reported and whether the change has been processed;
  - ☐ Program eligibility status; and
  - ☐ Benefits (by program)

# The Customer Service Toolbox - Query



- Individual participant can go to the web site, enter an assigned case number, user id and password, and access information about his/her case.
- This will act as a prompt for reporting changes. The system will instruct customers when and what kind of changes needed to be reported. It will also instruct the customer on what type of documentation should be provided to the eligibility worker when reporting different kinds of changes.
- Customers will not be allowed to make changes directly to their cases. New data will be transmitted to the CARES electronic In-Box. When the assigned eligibility worker logs into CARES, the change record will be waiting in the CARES Worker In-Box, ready for the worker to process the change on the case.

## **Wisconsin's FS Program Participation Grant Project - Demonstration**

- Provide personal service to individuals in specific communities
- Wisconsin is partnering with two agencies that have a long history of providing food security services to Wisconsin residents to lead the demonstration projects and coordinate with local community agencies in the implementation of the customer service toolbox

## Demonstration Sites - Continued



- Milwaukee - Hunger Task Force
  - HTF will select one location of each of the following types of sites:
    - Emergency Food Pantry
    - Grocery Store
    - Senior Commodity Distribution Site
    - Milwaukee Public Schools Location

## Demonstration Sites - Continued



- Suburban and Rural Areas of Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Community Action Program
  - WISCAP will provide assistance with all aspects of the customer service toolbox, conduct a focused media/outreach campaign about the tools and work with county IM office staff.
  - WISCAP will test different enrollment strategies
  - WISCAP will partner with TEFAP and GLITC and will also coordinate efforts with WIC offices. WISCAP will work with these partners to identify appropriate sites where the toolbox will be made available and where personal services can be provided.

## Demonstration Sites - Delivery Methods




- Core Activities for Each Site Project Include:
  - Information and referral service delivery
  - Assistance with all customer service tools
  - On-site application interviews when an eligibility worker is present
  - Customer service to provide information about Food Stamp Program services, including instruction about and practice using the EBT card
  - Evaluation

# Toolbox Evaluation

- Evaluation Objectives
  - ◆ Add value to customer service delivery
  - ◆ Increase participation
  - ◆ Increase payment accuracy
  - ◆ Reduce local workload
  
- Evaluation Methods
  - ◆ Customer focus groups and customer surveys will be used for customer service delivery
  - ◆ Enrollment data will evaluate participation
  - ◆ Error rate data will be used to evaluate payment accuracy
  - ◆ Local agency focus groups will be used to evaluate workload reduction



## Customer Service Toolbox - Timeline



|                   |  |
|-------------------|--|
| Summer 2003       | Begin Project Planning with Partner Agencies & Advisory Committee                                      |
| Early Spring 2004 | Implement Screener & Query - Food Stamps & Family Medicaid/BadgerCare)                                 |
| Late Summer 2004  | Add Elderly, Blind & Disabled Medicaid, WIC and other programs to Screener & add EBD Medicaid to Query |
| Winter 2004       | Implement Application for Services and Change Reporting for Food Stamps & Medicaid                     |
| Spring 2005       | Add Local Programs To Screener   |
| Spring 2006       | Complete Evaluation of Project   |

# SSI Recipients' FS Participation

- Wisconsin has nearly 97,000 individuals who receive SSI benefits.
- About 1/3 (28,300) of Wisconsin's SSI recipients are currently receiving Food Stamps.

# SSI Combined Application Project

Wisconsin has received approval to work with FNS on a series of waivers that will allow us to increase the participation of SSI recipients in the Food Stamp program.

## Options being Explored

- ❶ Using SSI data to print and mail a FS application that will require the applicant to provide a small amount of information to have his/her FS eligibility determined.
- ❷ Applying a standard benefit level for those SSI CAP participants determined FS eligible.
- ❸ Applying changes reported to SSA for our SSI CAP participants to FS eligibility determination and providing this group with a 36-month certification period.
- ❹ Handle these cases centrally - using SSI data for basic case data, then asking the participant for supplemental information using a scannable form, and then processing the case eligibility in CARES using the Central Application Processing Operation (CAPO).

# SSI Combined Application Project - Pros

- Increased participation
  - Helps meet food security goals for Wisconsin's seniors and persons with disabilities.
  - Potentially higher standard benefit level for participants.
  - Increases the amount of federal tax dollars returned to Wisconsin, stimulating state economy
  - Increases the QC sample size with participants with low error potential.
- Lower ES Workload
  - Could remove significant workload from local agencies.

## SSI Combined Application Project - Cons

- Effort to develop waiver with FNS
- Cost to develop and implement systems changes
- Increased on-going administrative costs associated with case processing.

## SSI Combined Application Project -Next Steps

- Summer 2003 - State work group to develop a proposal for Wisconsin's SSI CAP project.
- Winter 2004 - SSI CAP proposal complete and ready for review.

# Time Line - 2003

- Establish FS enrollment goals, submit nutrition education plans, mail outreach letters to SC participants, change program name, new marketing materials, mailing to food pantries, offer 800#
- Begin work on FS Program Participation Grant
- Begin work on an SSI CAP proposal for state administration.

# Time Line - 2004

- Evaluate 2003 Activities, monitor caseload trends, implement Milwaukee's eligibility/outreach van, measure and adjust strategies, direct mail to MA participants
- Implement the Screener (FS, MA, WIC, SeniorCare) & Query (FS/MA) & implement the Application for Services and Change Reporting components.
- Present SSI CAP proposal to state administration.



# Time Line - 2005

- Evaluate 2004 activities, monitor caseload trends, measure and adjust strategies, etc.
- Add local and federal programs to screener
- SSI CAP Proposal?